

“Sunīti argument refutation” – refuted

As stated before, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s purport to SB 4.12.32 contains the direct statement that establishes that women can not become *dīkṣā-gurus*. With the ultimate aim of misleading their readers into falsely believing that FDG implementation is authorized and authentic, against Śrīla Prabhupāda’s direct statement, the author(s) masquerade their arguments under the title “Sunīti argument refutation.” The author(s) *apa-siddhānta* or non bona fide understandings manifest under several sub-titles throughout their book aimed at systematically dismantling and minimizing the importance of the all important SB 4.12.32 purport.

This section refutes all such instances of *apa-siddhānta* found in their book. It is clear that the author(s) lack of understanding of the Vedic tradition, history, and Vedic culture combined with their tendency to juggle and interpolate the statements of the Founder-Ācārya and predecessor Ācāryas leaves them with no alternative other than spreading false philosophy. We would like to remind readers to meditate on the following verse translation:

“[Prakāśānanda Sarasvatī said] Anyone who wants to establish his own opinion or philosophy certainly cannot explain any scripture according to the principle of direct interpretation. [Cc *Madhya* 25.49]

Avoiding direct meanings – *Māyāvāda* exposed

On pages 38-47 of the book in question, the author(s) state that the SB 4.12.32 purport – a straightforward answer to the FDG issue – is “indeed ambiguous.” In this section, we provide evidence to show that such spurious interpretations expose the author(s)’ deployment of the *māyāvāda* tactic of avoiding the direct meanings. This arises due to deliberately ignoring the *Nārada-pāñcarātra* verses that specify the *vidhi* (allowances), *niṣedha* (prohibitions), and exceptions directly related to the topic of who can become a *dīkṣā-guru*. The author(s) falsely

accept that “women have to become *dikṣā-gurus*” as their guiding principle, which is *apa-siddhānta*, and their agenda is to somehow negate the words in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s SB 4.12.32 purport, which contains a direct statement against FDG/WDG. Instead, they promote only selective conversation excerpts (on pages 24-26 of their book) that seem to indicate the viability of FDG.

In their mad pursuit to push their agenda, the author(s) carefully and tactfully conceal their acts of selective quoting, doctored citations, and twisting direct meanings through innovative methods such as “magic ellipses” (already established in the previous sections). In the section titled, “Śrīla Prabhupāda’s Statements ... Seriously or Followed,” on pages 34–38 of their book, the author(s) try to establish that Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statements in his correspondences are as absolute as his statements contained in his books and purports. The author(s) claim that attaching less importance or significance to his letters compared to his books and classes is akin to the śāṅkarites’ approach; only to end up becoming followers of the śāṅkarites’ approach themselves as explained below:

It’s just too easy and too wrong to minimize or dismiss whatever statement of the Founder-Ācārya we might not like. That’s not the Vaiṣṇava way; it’s actually more like the Śāṅkarites’ approach: They (illegitimately) divide all injunctions of the scriptures into paramārthika (really real) and vyavahārika (conventionally real). The impersonal-sounding passages are given the highest status; but when the Vedas describe the personal form of God that’s taken only as metaphorical. [Page 36]

As it will be established in latter sections, the author(s) do the same thing of “minimizing and dismissing,” the statements of the Founder-Ācārya in his purport to SB 4.12.32 as, “Seeing Mirages in the Desert; Imagining Instructions in the Sunīti and Dhruva Story,” (a section-title spanning through pages 219–221

of their book). A snippet of their statements from the section on page 219 is shown below:

Searching that purport for “direct instructions” on women *dikṣā-guru* in ISKCON is like looking for water in the desert: We won’t find any water but might become victims of a mirage. The submitters see something in that purport, that it’s simply not there; they see a prohibition for ISKCON women to initiate; but that’s only an illusion, a projection. There is no such prohibition anywhere in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books, lectures, conversations or letters. The obsessive referral to “SB 4.12.32” – mentioned three times in this proposal alone – may simply result in confusing devotees and **in setting apart “SB 4.12.32” as the most misquoted purport in contemporary Vaiṣṇavism.** – [p 219]

The author(s) caution readers about becoming “victims of mirages” while searching the SB 4.12.32 purport for “direct instructions” regarding women *dikṣā-gurus*. Nonetheless, due to their low fund of knowledge of scriptural injunctions and due to their unscrupulous, unethical, word jugglery, they, deprived of the nectar from the SB 4.12.32 purport, end up as victims of the same mirage. Now returning to the passage on page 36, the pro-FDG stance is that Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books are descriptive or containing generic descriptions whereas his correspondences to his disciples are prescriptive or containing specific personal instructions. Is that not akin to the śāṅkarites’ stand of *vyavahārika* (conventionally real) and *paramārthika* (really real)? Is that approach not congruent to the śāṅkarites’ approach of giving more importance to the impersonal aspect of Vedas over those sections that describe the personal form of the God? If not why would the author(s) not present Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions contained in his books, lectures, and correspondences to his disciples in a consistent and un-altered fashion?

However, after going through this refutation in full, the readers can determine for themselves if the author(s) have presented Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings “As It Is.” As explained in one of the

later sections, the author(s) neither followed Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions on keeping his correspondences confidential, nor do they appear to have read his books thoroughly in order to obtain the proper conclusions and instructions. Nor did they demonstrate the integrity of presenting Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements contained in his books and correspondences without masquerading or juggling or twisting the words and meanings to suit their agenda. In his purport, to Cc *Ādi* 7.64 Śrīla Prabhupāda brings out the real plight of the māyāvāda philosophers not following their *ācārya*.

Māyāvādī *sannyāsīs* always misinterpret all the *śāstras* with their word jugglery and grammatical compositions, yet Śrīpāda Śaṅkarācārya himself condemned such jugglery of words in the verse *prāpte sannihite kāle na hi na hi rakṣati ḍukṛñ karaṇe*. *Ḍukṛñ* refers to suffixes and prefixes in Sanskrit grammar. Śaṅkarācārya warned his disciples that if they concerned themselves only with the principles of grammar, not worshiping Govinda, they were fools who would never be saved. Yet in spite of Śrīpāda Śaṅkarācārya's instructions, foolish Māyāvādī *sannyāsīs* are always busy juggling words on the basis of strict Sanskrit grammar. [Cc *Ādi* 7.64 purport]

Similarly:

1. Are the author(s) not guilty of grave offense by misinterpreting and interpolating Śrīla Prabhupāda's otherwise direct statements against FDG in his purport to SB 4.12.32 and statements contained in his books and other sources in general?
2. Are they not, by their word jugglery, committing the grave offence of portraying Śrīla Prabhupāda as an *anācāra* – one who says one thing in his purports (SB 4.12.32) and says the opposite in his other sources of instructions?

While they accused their *pūrvapakṣa* (opponents) of undertaking the śaṅkarites' approach to debates, the author(s) themselves are caught red-handed in practicing such approaches. The following

excerpt from page 231 of their book is the evidence for serious mangling and suppressing of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s words on the part of the author(s), as cited below (emphasis ours):

The second and final quote is what Śrīla Prabhupāda personally spoke during his Vyasa-puja celebrations to his disciples assembled in London, on 22 August 1973: My dear sons and daughters . . . Anyone who is coming to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he’s not ordinary living being. Anyone who is connected with our movement, h e’s not ordinary living being. Actually, he’s liberated soul. And I am very much hopeful that my disciples who are now participating today, even if I die, my movement will not stop, I am very much hopeful. Yes. All these nice boys and girls who have taken so seriously . . . To become spiritual master is not very difficult thing. You’ll have to become spiritual master. You, all my disciples, everyone should become spiritual master. . . . Remain always a servant of your spiritual master and present the thing as you have heard. You’ll be spiritual master. . . . So I hope that all of you, men, women, boys, and girls, become spiritual master. – [p 231]

In the transcription of the 36-minute lecture,⁴⁸ the author(s) have stitched together all the sentences containing the word spiritual master to present their narrative that Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted each one of his disciples to become *dīkṣā-gurus*. First of all, careful study of this lecture transcription from the source (vedabase) shows that the term spiritual master does not refer exclusively to *dīkṣā-guru* but can refer to the *patha-pradarśaka-guru* or a *śikṣā-guru*. Logical reasoning would be to question the author(s) that if by this statement Śrīla Prabhupāda meant he wanted each one of the members of ISKCON to become an initiating spiritual master (*dīkṣā-guru*), then who will be left to become a disciple? Even if we agree with the premise that if every disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda qualifies to become a *dīkṣā-guru* as per the scriptural injunctions, still there would be

48 Full lecture: <https://tinyurl.com/2ucp9xeu>

some basic etiquette and considerations of the laws of disciplic succession that suggest that a disciple may not accept his own *dikṣā-disciples* during his guru's manifest presence. Since in some of his conversations, Śrīla Prabhupāda has himself mentioned that this etiquette should not be violated, it is less likely that he meant that he wanted all of his disciples to become exclusively *dikṣā-gurus* even during their guru's physical presence. Based on the facts – Śrīla Prabhupāda never appointed a female disciple as a temple president or as one of his eleven *ṛtvik* representatives, or as one of the GBC members – it may be stated that Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted all of his male disciples to accept and adopt the laws of disciplic succession and eventually become *dikṣā-gurus*.

Whereas if we consider that Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted all of his disciples to become *patha-pradarśaka-guru* (the guru, or the spiritual master, who shows the way), then it is more logical that he wanted each devotee to engage themselves in preaching to new people to show them the way to become Kṛṣṇa conscious. And in due course of time these newcomers, on the strength of their understanding of the philosophy, would themselves seek a bona fide *dikṣā-guru* of their selection who could be same or different from the one who introduced them to the movement. Hence, this shows that the author(s) are really into stitching together a narrative out of Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings using methods that are contrary to the vaiṣṇava method of *samanvaya*, the reconciliation of various statements within an overall harmonious understanding (“*tat tu samanvayāt*,” *Vedānta-sūtra* 1.1.4).

“The family relationship” vs. “specifically his mother”

On pages 38-40 of their book (cited below), the author(s) state that the published version of the SB 4.12.32 purport is remarkably different from the original manuscript. In their attempt to dismantle its importance, they state that a single

sentence modification on the part of the editors is the cause for the 20+ years of arguments over this purport.

Now let us consider that contentious sentence from the “original” manuscript and the published version as shown below:

Published version: Sunīti, however, being a woman, and specifically his mother, could not become Dhruva Mahārāja’s dīkṣā-guru.

“Original” manuscript: Sunīti, however, being in family relationship with Dhruva, his mother, and also woman, could not become the *dīkṣā-guru* of Dhruva Mahārāja.

On page 40 of the book in contention, the author(s) further say:

“Śrīla Prabhupāda stresses “the family relationship” between Sunīti and Dhruva; the sentence “being a woman” (which Śrīla Prabhupāda never spoke) shifts the emphasis on Sunīti’s gender; the expression “being a woman” appears only after the editing. Most probably Hayagrīva Prabhu didn’t expect that his slightly imprecise editing, the words he added (“being a woman”) would become, after almost forty years, the pivotal but fictitious battle cry of those who oppose women *dīkṣā-gurus*. In any case, what the original expression **“and also woman”** (or even the published “being a woman”) tells us?” – [p 40]

This edit happened during the manifest presence of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Did he object to the edits that Hayagrīva Prabhu made? Wouldn’t Śrīla Prabhupāda have been greatly concerned if he thought that such an editorial change could split his movement 40 years later? So, is this particular editing change really a big deal? In the passage that starts with, **“Śrīla Prabhupāda stresses ...”** the author(s) argue that saying **“being a woman**, and specifically his mother” versus “being in family relationship with Dhruva, his mother, **and also woman**,” causes the whole meaning of the statement to change and therefore severely impacts the discussion regarding WDG/FDG implementation. If we were to agree with the author(s) that “being in family relationship” was the inhibiting factor

preventing Sunīti from becoming *dīkṣā-guru*, then this would also mean that fathers cannot initiate their sons. Historical evidence shows that *vaiṣṇava-dīkṣā* in many vaiṣṇava traditions, especially the *Śrī-sampradāya* tradition, follows a process in which the head of the household initiates both men (sons) and women of his family. We will discuss this in little more detail in the next section. On page 40 of the book in contention, the author(s) further state:

In any case, what the original expression “**and also woman**” (or even the published “being a woman”) tells us?” All that we can legitimately conclude is that in Dhruva Mahārāja’s time, a Satya-yuga in the Svāyambhuva Manu manvantara – approximately one billion nine hundred million years ago – women were restricted from giving initiation, at least among the members of the royal order or to their sons. That’s all. How relevant is this information to the topic of ISKCON’s women *dīkṣā-gurus* today? The methods of initiation then and now are quite different; at that time humanity was following the *vaidika* system, in which women couldn’t even take initiation, what to speak of giving initiation: ... There is no rule preventing ladies from becoming *dīkṣā-gurus* in the *pāñcarātrika* system; in fact there are dozens of historical examples of ladies *dīkṣā-guru* in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, including in the *dīkṣā* lineage of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. – [p 40]

While the author(s) argue vainly that “being in family relationship” is the main factor, they cleverly divert the attention of the readers away from the phrase “**and also woman.**” In the above citation, we find that the author(s) deceive their readers by inserting several spurious statements that are nowhere mentioned in the purport to SB 4.12.32, under scrutiny, thereby raising the following questions:

- Where does Śrīla Prabhupāda mention that the system of initiation that humanity in *satya-yuga* followed was *vaidika* system? On the contrary, as already shown with evidence, Śrīla Prabhupāda mentions in the purports to canto 4,

chapter 8 of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* that Dhruva Mahārāja was initiated by Nārada Munī via the *pāñcarātrika* system.

- Where does Śrīla Prabhupāda mention that only women of *satya-yuga* were exclusively restricted from giving initiation, at least among the members of the royal order or to their sons? On the contrary, Śrīla Prabhupāda makes no reference to any particular *yuga* related considerations.
- Where does Śrīla Prabhupāda mention that the restrictions against women becoming *dīkṣā-gurus*, mentioned in SB 4.12.32 purport is not relevant to ISKCON’s women? On the contrary Śrīla Prabhupāda said women in general could not become *dīkṣā-gurus* which includes women of all *yuga* including the women of ISKCON.
- Where is the scriptural evidence for the statement that the *pāñcarātrika* system does not inhibit women from becoming *dīkṣā-gurus*? On the contrary, we have already shown the evidence from the *Nārada-pāñcarātra Bharadvāja-saṁhitā* (verses 1.42 – 44) which prohibit women from becoming *dīkṣā-gurus*.
- Where does Śrīla Prabhupāda, in the whole gamut of his teachings, inform us about historical examples of women *dīkṣā-gurus* in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism and about the *dīkṣā* lineage of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura? On the contrary, he mentioned that only exceptional women like Jāhnavā-devī could become *dīkṣā-gurus* and not ordinary women.
- Where is the evidence to show that the system of initiations adopted in the *dīkṣā* lineage of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura is as per the *Nārada-pāñcarātra* which ISKCON follows?

On page 206 of their book, under the title, “The Mysterious, All-encompassing (but Imaginary) “Rule”,” the author(s) argue that there is no rule in the scriptures against women acting as *dīkṣā-gurus*. At the time of writing this book in contention neither the author(s) nor the opposing camp seemed to have researched the *Nārada-pāñcarātra Bharadvāja-saṁhitā*. However, in light of the latter discovery of the verses 1.42 – 44 of the *Bharadvāja-saṁhitā* we clearly see that the author(s) are merely keen on diverting

the attention of their readers away from the all-important direct statement of Śrīla Prabhupāda contained in the purport to SB 4.12.32, on the topic of women *dikṣā-gurus*. In both the published version and the original manuscript version of the purport to SB 4.12.32, it is clear that the restriction imposed therein is in harmony with *śāstric* injunctions (*Bharadvāja-saṁhitā* verses 1.42 – 44) that gives us the rule forbidding women from becoming *dikṣā-gurus*. Hence, when the purport to SB 4.12.32 is studied with the *Nārada-pāñcarātra Bharadvāja-saṁhitā*, we find that contrary to the author(s) claim on page 211 of their book, under points “c” and “d” of their book, the ban on women acting as *dikṣā-gurus* is indeed a universal principle applicable to all women of all ages. It is unambiguously clear that these restrictions are not specific to the system of initiation during the time of Queen Sunitī or the women of her times. Therefore, we conclude that because the author(s), at the time of writing their book were not informed about the rules specified in the *Nārada-pāñcarātra Bharadvāja-saṁhitā*, their arguments on pages 206 through 214 of their book – that using the purport to SB 4.12.32 or Sunitī to ban women *dikṣā-gurus* in ISKCON is a grave distortion of the facts – is effectively rendered null and void.

History of father initiating son

The following quote from *Brahma-vaivarta-puraṇa* states that a father can bestow upon his son both knowledge and mantras related to the Supreme Absolute Truth.

*sarveṣāṁpi vandyānām janakaḥ paramo guroḥ
vidhyādātā mantradātā dvau samau ca pituḥ parau*

The father is the best of all teachers or gurus; he is the one who bestows both transcendental knowledge (vidhyādātā) and mantras (mantradātā). [*Brahma-vaivarta-puraṇa*, *Brahma-khāṇḍa* 24.4]

Hence, being in a family relationship is not a disqualification for a father to become the guru for his son(s). There is another verse

from the *Nārada-pāñcarātra Bharadvāja-saṁhitā* (2.34) that also confirms that a father can bestow mantras upon his son, as cited below:

*svayaṁ brahmaṇi nikṣiptān jātān eva ca mantrataḥ
vinitān atha putrādīn saṁskṛtya pratibodhayet*

After having performed the *nāma-saṁskāra* for his sons and other subordinates, the spiritual master personally evaluates them to select those who are dedicated to the service of the Lord [*brahmaṇi nikṣiptān*], who have been purified by mantras, and who are obedient and submissive by nature. For such disciples, he performs the *mantra-saṁskāra* and reveals to them the meaning of the given mantras. [NP-BS 2.34]

In *Bhagavad-gītā* 4.1, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa states that He initiated Vivasvān who in turn initiated his son Vaivasvata Manu. If we accept the author(s) proposition that a father or mother or anyone being in a family relationship cannot initiate his or her son or a relative, then how could Vivasvān, initiate Vaivasvata Manu, although being in a family relationship as his father? The teachings of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, as stated in *Mahābhārata* (*Śānti-parva* 348.51–52), come in disciplic succession via family relationship. In our *guru-paramparā* list as given by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, we find that the Lord Kṛṣṇa initiated his son Lord Brahmā and sage Nārada received initiation from his father Lord Brahmā. Likewise, there are numerous instances of the father initiating his son throughout the Vedic culture. For that matter, what about the statement of Lord Kṛṣṇa in Bg 4.3 wherein He accepts Arjuna as His disciple in order to re-establish a broken *paramparā* link albeit being his maternal cousin?⁴⁹

Some say that in general parents (both father and mother) cannot initiate their children. They even suggest this to be the reason why Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura did not himself initiate his son Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura; that it proves

49 Purports to <https://vedabase.io/en/library/sb/1/8/3> and <https://vedabase.io/en/library/sb/1/8/21>.

that being in a family relationship prohibits one from bestowing mantras on relatives. Whereas a mother is forbidden to become the initiating spiritual master of her son, to claim that a father cannot initiate his son is purely a speculation not supported by scriptural injunctions. As established before based on solid references, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura gave *siddha-praṇālī-dikṣā* to his other son Śrīla Lalita Prasāda Ṭhākura and hence, it proves that scriptures allow fathers to initiate their sons. Moreover, the statement from the *Brahma-vaivarta-purāṇa*, *Brahma-khāṇḍa* (24.4), cited above, supports the general principle that one can receive a mantra from one's father. There are numerous examples in the *Śrī-vaiṣṇava sampradaya* – Śrī Yāmunācārya received his mantras from his father and Śrī Vedānta Deśika initiated his son Śrī Kumāra Varadācryar and so on. Hence, the episode wherein Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura chose not to give *dikṣā* to Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura had nothing to do with *śāstric* prohibitions, but had to be a specific non-related reason.

If “**the family relationship**” was the only reason why Sunīti could not initiate Dhruva Mahārāja then how come the female *dikṣā* lineage of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, containing female *dikṣā-gurus* initiated by their family members, is considered bona fide by the author(s)? How do they conveniently use it as precedence for recommending the implementation of FDG in ISKCON?

Can a mother become a guru?

Some proponents of FDG/WDG argue that the statement “specifically his mother,” that Śrīla Prabhupāda stressed, means that no mother can initiate her son and hence, it is not that her “being a woman,” was the real reason why Sunīti could not become the *dikṣā-guru* of Dhruva Mahārāja. We do not agree for several reasons with the pro-FDG interpretation that being a mother and not being a woman is the main reason that she cannot initiate her son. If, then why did Śrīla Prabhupāda add

the fragment, “being a woman or also a woman?” Does this mean that the pro-FDG camp subscribes to the modern atheistic concepts of same sex marriage wherein “mothers” can be a man or a woman? On what basis is this sentence fragment to be considered superfluous? To answer this question, it is important to analyze the relationship between a husband, wife, mother, and son from *śāstra-sādhu-guru-vākyas*. The Vedic scriptures declare that a man continues to live even after his death through his son, as cited below (emphasis ours):

sa eṣa bhagavān droṇaḥ prajā-rūpeṇa vartate
tasyātmano 'rdham patny āste nānvagād vīrasūḥ kṛpī

“He [Droṇācārya] is certainly still existing, being represented by his son. His wife Kṛpī did not undergo a satī with him because she had a son.”

Purport: The wife of Droṇācārya, Kṛpī, is the sister of Kṛpācārya. A devoted wife, who is according to revealed scripture the better half of her husband, is justified in embracing voluntary death along with her husband if she is without issue. But in the case of the wife of Droṇācārya, she did not undergo such a trial because she had her son, the representative of her husband. **A widow is a widow only in name if there is a son of her husband existing.** So in either case Aśvatthāmā was the representative of Droṇācārya, and therefore killing Aśvatthāmā would be like killing Droṇācārya. That was the argument of Draupadī against the killing of Aśvatthāmā. – [SB 1.7.45]

Hence, from the above statement we clearly see that the husband is the default guru and spiritual guide of the wife; her son is the representative of her husband. Hence, as a wife a woman is always dependant on her husband, and after her husband’s death she as a mother is always dependant upon her son for spiritual guidance and material protection. In several other places in his writings and conversations Śrīla Prabhupāda emphasizes the fact that a women be given material and spiritual guidance by a first-class father before marriage, a first-

class husband after marriage, and by a first-class son after the demise of her husband.⁵⁰

The fact that according to *stri-dharma* a mother is always dependent on her son for material protection and as well as spiritual guidance, which prohibits her as an independent spiritual master for her son. This is a likely reason for Śrīla Prabhupāda to mention the sentence fragment, “specifically his mother.”

Irrespective of whether this argument is valid or not, according to *śāstras*, *sadhus*, and all *ācāryas*, specifically statements of Śrīla Prabhupāda,⁵¹ we understand that a woman cannot be independent and must be protected by her father, husband, or son in all stages of her life. So, a son who has the responsibility to protect his mother cannot accept her as an initiating spiritual master because as established in the previous section a disciple cannot offer protection to the spiritual master considering the spiritual master to be an object of his mercy and protection. Śrīla Prabhupāda also stresses in so many places in his teachings that a woman must be married and that is why even though he was a *sannyāsī*, out of compassion for his female disciples he was involved in performing their marriages.⁵² As per this statement, a woman cannot be related to any man other than in the roles of a daughter, wife, or mother and hence she cannot become the initiating spiritual master. Furthermore, Śrīla Prabhupāda taught us the same instruction that Lord Caitanya and *śāstra* teaches us; that every man should see every woman other than his wife as a mother. This means that even though a woman may not be his biological mother he is still bound to offer her protection as a son and hence he cannot take *dikṣā* from any women. Also, a husband cannot take *dikṣā* from his wife because a woman

50 <https://tinyurl.com/mudwyt2m>, <https://tinyurl.com/4sm6d5ms>, <https://tinyurl.com/5k45bkcy>

51 Contained in his books, purports, classes, correspondences, and room conversations

52 <https://vedabase.io/en/library/cc/adi/7/37/>

by the arrangement of the Vedic marriage, has to accept her husband as her guru (*pati-guru*).⁵³ These are the general rule for the common man to follow. However, there can be some exceptions as is the case in the following statement of Śrīla Prabhupāda, that one may offer as a counter argument:

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura writes in his Anubhāṣya, “Vīrabhadra Gosānī was the direct son of Śrīla Nityānanda Prabhu and a disciple of Jāhnavā-devī. His real mother was Vasudhā. In the Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā (67) He is mentioned as an incarnation of Kṣīrodakaśāyī Viṣṇu. Therefore Vīrabhadra Gosānī is nondifferent from Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu. [Cc Ādi 11.8 purport]

First of all, we like to remind our readers that, as we have already explained in previous sections, the *Nārada-pāñcarātra Bharadvāja-saṁhitā* (1.44) clearly states that, personalities like Jāhnavā-devī, the consort of Śrīla Nityānanda Prabhu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, come under the category of *pratyakṣitātma-nātha* and hence are exceptions to all the rules and can initiate disciples. Secondly, it may well be argued that even though Vīrabhadra Gosānī was the Supreme Personality of Godhead, He also followed the *śāstric* injunctions and hence as common men of the *varṇāśrama* institution it is our duty to follow the injunctions of scriptures such as the *Nārada-pāñcarātra Bharadvāja-saṁhitā* with regards to *vaiṣṇava-dīkṣā*.

Missing context and missed general principles

In both the original manuscript and the published versions of the contentious sentence from the purport to SB 4.12.32, the word “however” is used to establish the continuation of the context of the previous sentence and as well as to list all the restrictions to the principles mentioned in the previous sentence. Let us consider the contentious portion of the purport to SB 4.12.32 (parenthical additions and emphasis are ours):

53 <https://vedabase.io/en/library/sb/6/18/33>

[Context and general principle:] According to *śāstric* injunctions, there is no difference between *śikṣā-guru* and *dikṣā-guru*, and generally the *śikṣā-guru* later on becomes the *dikṣā-guru*. [Published/original manuscript: purport to SB 4.12.32]

Sunīti, however, being a woman, and specifically his mother, could not become Dhruva Mahārāja's *dikṣā-guru*. [contentious sentence in the published version]

Sunīti, however, being in family relationship with Dhruva, his mother, and also woman, could not become the *dikṣā-guru* of Dhruva Mahārāja. [contentious sentence in the original manuscript]

In the sentence starting with “According to *śāstric* injunctions ...,” the context and the general principles are established. There are two general principles as part of this context: a) *śāstric* injunctions shall be the central determining factor and b) in accordance with *śāstric* injunctions, generally the *śikṣā-guru*, being not different from *dikṣā-guru*, later on becomes the *dikṣā-guru*. The next sentence (the contentious sentence) establishes restrictions on these general principles. Given this understanding the author(s)’ approach in analyzing the contentious sentence in either version divorced from the previous sentence is not only incorrect but also unethical and all such attempts will surely violate the established general principles.

Given this context and general principles, the real question is: why could Suniti although being the *śikṣā-guru* of Dhruva Mahārāja, later on not become his *dikṣā-guru*? The conjunction “However” is present in both versions the contentious sentence and hence that sentence has to be understood in context with previous sentences. Moreover, it is our responsibility to harmonize the answers in accordance with the *śāstric* injunctions. Now analyzing the contentious sentence in both versions in their “as they are” form gives us the following as reasons for Suniti’s disqualification from becoming Dhruva Mahārāja’s *dikṣā-guru*:

- Sunitī was a woman so she could not become the dīkṣā-guru of Dhruva Mahārāja.
- Sunitī was Dhruva Mahārāja’s mother so she could not become the dīkṣā-guru of Dhruva Mahārāja.
- Sunitī was in a family relationship as Dhruva Mahārāja’s mother so she could not become the dīkṣā-guru of Dhruva Mahārāja.

In previous sections, it has already been established with evidence from *śāstras* that each one of the above considerations is true and that these considerations are all applicable to all women of all times in general, and not just specific to Sunitī’s case.

- According to the Nārada-pāñcarātra Bharadvāja-saṁhitā (verses 1.42 – 44) women in general cannot become dīkṣā-gurus, unless they are on the siddha or self-realized platform.
- According to SB 1.7.45 and its purport, a son is the representative of the father and hence a widow with a son is actually not a widow. In his purport to SB 3.23.52, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that a son is responsible to give relief to his mother in her old age through imparting spiritual guidance and hence a mother cannot become the dīkṣā-guru of her son.
- According to the Brahma-vaivarta-puraṇa, Brahma-khāṇḍa (24.4) and the Nārada-pāñcarātra Bharadvāja-saṁhitā (2.34) a father can become the dīkṣā-guru of his son.

From the above analysis we have proved that although the contentious sentence from the purport to SB 4.12.32 seems to be straightforward and simple, the author(s) of the book in contention and the pro-FDG camp avoid its direct meaning because they missed not only the context but also neglected the principles established by the previous sentence. What could be their reason to discount and twist the direct meaning of a straightforward, and direct statement on the topic at hand? Certainly, ignoring the context and neglecting the principle of

keeping *śāstra* as the center of all, is the cause for the author(s) to indulge in speculation to a great extent – that “**the family relationship**” is the most important part or primary emphasis and that “**and also woman**” is just an added insignificant literary ornament or secondary consideration. As stated in Cc *Madhya* 25.49, the author(s) intentionally juggle the direct statements to establish their own dubious principles.

Women of Satya-yuga did not get dikṣā – refuted

Let us jump to a passage on page 219 of the book in contention, as shown below, wherein the author(s) make some more statements to create a mountain out of a mole hill:

We have already shown that there are no “**direct instructions**” in “**SB 4.12.32**” concerning ISKCON women *dikṣā-gurus*. Besides being affected by a **faulty editing that changed its emphasis** that purport simply informs us that Sunīti – the daughter-in-law of Svāyambhuva Manu, living in a Satya-yuga of almost two-billion years ago, **in a culture with a different system of initiation (in which women were not even initiated)** – did not initiate her son, Dhruva Mahārāja. – [p 219]

The author(s) have ignored the *Nārada-pāñcarātra* verses containing direct instructions prohibiting women who are not pure devotees, in all yugas, from becoming *dikṣā-gurus* and they misconstrue the SB 4.12.32 purport. No further comment is needed on the “change of emphasis” argument of the author(s) since we have already refuted that argument and exposed it as mere word jugglery skills. We have also established that the *pāñcarātra* system of initiation existed in *satya-yuga*, which is not different from today’s ISKCON system. The claim made by the author(s) that during *satya-yuga*, “**women were not even initiated,**” surely exposes their incognizance of Lord Kṛṣṇa’s Vedic culture in which women of all yugas receive initiation by their marriage (*pati-guru*: refer SB 6.18.33-34), as stated in *Manu-saṁhitā* cited below:

*vaivāhiko vidhiḥ strīṇāṃ saṃskāro vaidikaḥ smṛtaḥ
patisevā gurau vāso gr̥hārtho'gniparikriyā*

”For females, the rites of marriage have been ordained to be their ‘Vedic Sacrament’ (initiation), the serving of the husbands their ‘residence with the Teacher’ (Guru), and the household duties their ‘tending of fire.’ (Spiritual activities)” [*Manu-saṃhitā* 2.67]

Furthermore, the Vedic scriptures advocate that anyone sincere about spiritual advancement can get initiated through *pāñcarātri*ka system irrespective of any circumstance, as shown below:

*tāntrikeṣu ca mantreṣu dīkṣāyām yoṣitām api
sādhvinām adhikāro 'sti śūdrādīnām ca sad-dhiyām*

“Śūdras and women who are chaste and sincerely interested in understanding the Absolute Truth are qualified to be initiated with the *pāñcarātri*ka-mantras. [*Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* 1.194]

How can we expect any meaningful information regarding advanced topics of scriptural injunctions from someone who lacks fundamental knowledge of Vedic culture? It is clear that the author(s) are neither aware of the history of the *pāñcarātri*ka system based on the *Nārada-pāñcarātra* nor are they aware that unlike the *vaidika* system of initiation the *pāñcarātri*ka system allows women to receive *pāñcarātra* based *mantra-dīkṣā*. The author(s) seemed to be confused about the difference between accepting and awarding initiations and at the same time are also unaware that the *Bhāradvāja-saṃhitā* (1.42 – 44) prohibits women from giving *mantra-dīkṣā*.

Are satya-yuga women lesser than kali-yuga ISKCON women?

On pages 40 through 41 of their book, in their continued attempt to discount the SB 4.12.32 purport, the author(s) present several other arguments – such as differences between the yugas (the then *satya-yuga* vs the now *kali-yuga*), the tradition of women *dīkṣā-gurus* in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism in the *dīkṣā* lineage of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, etc. However, in their relentless attempt to dismantle the SB 4.12.32 purport, the author(s)

distort different statements from the purport by stating that the system of initiation in *satya-yuga* was different from the system of initiation in *kali-yuga*, an idea which is not mentioned in the purport. The absence of scriptural evidence and scriptural basis in their arguments will degrade the scholarly standard of ISKCON's brahminical culture if left unchallenged. We shall analyze some more of the author(s)' poorly researched arguments in the following sub-sections:

Let us consider this statement from page 40 of their book wherein the author(s) claim:

All that we can legitimately conclude is that in Dhruva Mahārāja's time, a Satya-yuga in the Svāyambhuva Manu manvantara – approximately one billion nine hundred million years ago – women were restricted from giving initiation, at least among the members of the royal order or to their sons. That's all. How relevant is this information to the topic of ISKCON's women *dikṣā-gurus* today? – [page 40]

In prior sections, based on *śāstra-vākyas*, it has been established sufficiently that in all yugas all women are eligible to receive *vaiṣṇava-dikṣā* but in no yuga, can women, who are not on the *siddhā* platform, give initiations. The author(s) claim that the age-old Vedic injunction of restricting women from giving initiation is not relevant for today's ISKCON women *dikṣā-gurus* only renders their proposal to implement FDG speculative since it blatantly violates Vedic injunctions. Surprisingly, the majority of GBC members continue to support this book and its author(s) who seem to want to push ISKCON to its nadir in terms of defying Vedic injunctions. From various sources including the *Bhagavad-gītā* verse: “*evam paramparā-prāptam imaṃ rājarṣayo viduḥ*,” it is certainly clear that the saintly kings (not queens) of the royal order acted as gurus in succession, as is also evident from the following verse from *Mahābhārata* (*Śānti-parva* 348.51–52).

tretā-yugādau ca tato

manuś ca loka-bhrty-arthaṃ

ikṣvākuṇā ca kathito

vivasvān manave dadau

sutāyekṣvākave dadau

vyāpya lokān avasthitaḥ

“At the beginning of the millennium known as Tretā-yuga, this science of the relationship with the Supreme was delivered by Vivasvān to Manu. Manu, being the father of mankind, gave it to his son Mahārāja Ikṣvāku, the king of this earth planet and forefather of the Raghu dynasty, in which Lord Rāmacandra appeared.”

However, following Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions to always explain things according to revealed scriptures, we will consider the purport from SB 4.12.32 (cited below, emphasis added) as it is, in which he states why a woman (in all yugas, a woman remains woman) could not become a *dīkṣā-guru*:

“Actually, Dhruva Mahārāja’s mother, Sunīti, was his *patha-pradarśaka-guru*. *Patha-pradarśaka-guru* means “the guru, or the spiritual master, who shows the way.” Such a guru is sometimes called *śikṣā-guru*. Although Nārada Muni was his *dīkṣā-guru* (initiating spiritual master), Sunīti, his mother, was the first who gave him instruction on how to achieve the favor of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. It is the duty of the *śikṣā-guru* or *dīkṣā-guru* to instruct the disciple in the right way, and it depends on the disciple to execute the process. According to *sāstric* injunctions, there is no difference between *śikṣā-guru* and *dīkṣā-guru*, and generally the *śikṣā-guru* later on becomes the *dīkṣā-guru*. Sunīti, however, being a woman, and specifically his mother, could not become Dhruva Mahārāja’s *dīkṣā-guru*.” [SB 4.12.32 purport]

When we go through this purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda establishes that Sunīti – Dhruva Mahārāja’s *patha-pradarśaka-guru* also known as *śikṣā-guru* – being a woman could not become his formal initiating spiritual master. Hence it was due to her immutable gender that Sunīti could not become the formal *dīkṣā-guru* of Dhruva Mahārāja. It is not that being his mother is the sole reason that Sunīti could not become the *dīkṣā-guru* of Dhruva Mahārāja as interpreted by the author(s). Notice that the purport does not mention her birth in *satya-yuga* or the royal order, yet the author(s) concoct a novel concept with the sole intention to classify the entire purport as being unsuitable

for ISKCON's women (women of kali-yuga). In light of such an exposé, would it be incorrect to state that the author(s) are exemplary word jugglers who fit the description given by Prakāśānanda Sarasvatī in Cc *Madhya* 25.49, cited before? With so much serious distortion and chicanery is it unreasonable to reject the author(s)' conclusions that in *satya-yuga*, women were restricted to initiate but not so in *kali-yuga*, as indeed illegitimate?

Lack of faith and vision of revealed scriptures - exposed

In this section, we will discuss the lack of faith in and knowledge of revealed scriptures on the part of the author(s) as being the reason for their unreasonable claims while refuting the “Sunīti argument.”

Source of false impression & spurious interpolation – exposed

Let us continue our review with a passage from page 41 of the book in question as cited below:

The proponents of the “Sunīti argument” imagine that Śrīla Prabhupāda was saying “As Sunīti couldn't initiate Dhruva, no woman can ever initiate anyone,” which, Śrīla Prabhupāda never said. They squeeze out a meaning, an instruction for ISKCON (“women cannot initiate”) that is simply not there in Śrīla Prabhupāda's words – neither in the original transcript, nor in the published version. To give an example of how false impressions can be generated, let's take a look at what Śrīla Prabhupāda once wrote in a purport of Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta:

According to the pāñcarātra injunction, only a householder brāhmaṇa can initiate. Others cannot. – [p 41]

In the earlier section, it has been established that the author(s)' statement – “Dhruva Mahārāja's time, a Satya-yuga ... women were restricted from giving initiation, at least among the members of the royal order or to their sons,” – is their concoction. There is not even a hint of such a bogus concept given in the purport to SB 4.12.32 – neither in the original

transcript nor in the published version. We have further established that the *pāñcarātri*ka system of initiation existed at the time of Dhruva Mahārāja (*satya-yuga*) just as it is existing in present-day ISKCON. We also already established that according to the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* (1.42-44) that unless a woman is on *pratyakṣitātma-nātha* platform she cannot initiate. This is the eternal system of *pāñcarātri*ka-*dīkṣā* as ordained by revealed scriptures and is neither an imagination nor a squeezed out meaning, by the proponents of the “Sunīti argument,” as claimed by the author(s). Given the nature of the interpretations and interpolations of the SB 4.12.32 purport by the author(s), is it wrong to suspect that such acts could indeed be deliberate?

Without the knowledge of the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* and the collections of *saṁhitās* belonging to the *Nārada-pāñcarātra*, the author(s) have imagined – that during Dhruva Mahārāja’s time humanity was exclusively following the *vaidika* system of initiation and that in that system, ladies are not allowed to become *dīkṣā-gurus*. In the guise of cautioning the devotee community about being deceived, the author(s) falsely assert that the straightforward purport to SB 4.12.32 is a source of misunderstanding; and thus, become prime candidates to be considered superficial followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda (*Prabhupādanugas*). The proof for this has been presented beyond doubt with evidence from guru, *sādhū*, and *śāstra* by highlighting several contentious passages in the author(s)’ voluminous book. The author(s) outrageously portray genuine followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda as being “cheats,” and their words of caution for the devotee community are nothing but crocodile tears intended to manipulate them into endorsing their *apa-siddhānta* and *asāstriya* or *śāstra-virudha* agendas.

Hence, as per the purport to Cc *Madhya* 20.352, all such statements that are opposed to Vedic injunctions should be rejected. Sometimes it is seen that certain statements of Śrīla Prabhupāda, although aligned with scriptures, do not contain

the actual citation of the Vedic scriptural injunction. In those cases, it is our responsibility, while using such quotes, to harmonize and provide scriptural evidence for all such citations, which the author(s) often do not do in their book.

“Spurious Editing of Cc *Madhya* 4.111” – malintent exposed

However, on pages 41 and 42 of their book the author(s) did a piecemeal job of selectively extracting statements from the purport to Cc *Madhya* 4.111 to support their garrulous comparison with the SB 4.12.32 purport. Let us analyze extracted statements from pages 41 and 42 of their book, as cited below (emphasis and text in square brackets are our additions):

To give an example of how false impressions can be generated, let’s take a look at what **Śrīla Prabhupāda once wrote in a purport** of Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta:

“According to the pāñcarātra injunction, only a householder brāhmaṇa can initiate. Others cannot.”

Should we now start agitating to stop sannyāsīs from initiating? Should we start pressuring the GBC to ban sannyāsīs from being *dikṣā-gurus* because “Śrīla Prabhupāda said it”? Probably it would be better to wait a bit, especially as that purport goes on, revealing something different: [p 41]

In the very beginning of their book on page 25, the author(s) cite the famous verse from the *Mahābhārata Vana-pārva* 313.117.⁵⁴ However, in the excerpt shown above, from page 41 of their book, the author(s) extracted one line from a long purport and created an argument (*tarka*) only to prove that they are clueless about the variegatedness of scriptural injunctions in connection

54 *tarko ‘pratiṣṭhaḥ śrūtaḥ vibhinnā nāsāv ṛṣir yasya mataḥ na bhinnam dharmasya tattvaṁ nihitaṁ guhāyām mahājano yena gataḥ sa panthāḥ*. “Dry arguments are inconclusive. A great personality whose opinion does not differ from others is not considered a great sage. Simply by studying the Vedas, which are variegated, one cannot come to the right path by which religious principles are understood. The solid truth of religious principles is hidden in the heart of an unadulterated, self-realized person. Consequently, as the *śāstras* confirm, one should accept whatever progressive path the *mahājanas* advocate.”

with the *Vaidika* and the *pāñcarātra* system of initiations. Vedic scriptures contain instructions that are apparently contradicting each other; requiring reconciliation with statements from *guru-sādhū* in harmony with statements from the *sāstras*. For instance, in certain places the Vedic scriptures state that one has to enter the householder life before becoming a *sannyāsī*. Whereas, in other places the scriptures state that if a person is handicapped, he can directly become a *sannyāsī*. In his work, “Yatidharma sammūchaya,” Śrī Govinda Jeeyar (Śrī Yādava Prakāśa), quoting scriptures, states that a wandering ascetic who hears words that are kind or unkind, soothing or scathing, but remains as if he had not heard them is said to be “deaf” and hence being a handicap, he can enter the *sannyasāśrama* without entering the householder’s life.

Similarly, the author(s) have jumped the gun by simply extracting one statement from the purport to Cc *Madhya* 4.111 that states that only a householder *brāhmaṇa* can initiate and others cannot. Had the author(s) diligently read the purport to Cc *Madhya* 4.111 in its entirety and in harmony with actual *pāñcarātra* scriptures, they would have understood the actual roles of a *vaiṣṇava-brāhmaṇa* and a transcendental *sannyāsī* in regards to initiating householders and others of the *varṇāśrama* institution into the worship of Lord Viṣṇu’s Deity. Instead of understanding the variegatedness of the imports of the Vedic scriptures, the author(s), employing dry logic, further speculate and quibble unnecessarily only to commit the *artha-vāda* offense – giving mundane interpretations to the purports of Cc *Madhya* 4.111 and SB 4.12.32.

This will be established in subsequent paragraphs beyond doubt – that instead of accepting the progressive path advocated by the *mahājanas*, such as Śrīla Prabhupāda, as it is, the author(s) are merely attached to establishing their mundane view points even by hook or by crook. Continuing with their argument on

page 41 and 42 of their book, the author(s) state (strike-thru and emphasis ours):

“[...**To implement this conclusion,**] Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu gave us His opinion in the verse kibā vipra kibā nyāsī, etc. This indicates that the Lord understood the weakness of society in its maintaining that only a gr̥hastha-brāhmaṇa should be a spiritual master. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu indicated that it does not matter whether the spiritual master is a gr̥hastha (householder), a sannyāsī or even a śūdra. – Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Madhya-līlā* 4.111, purport.”

Similarly, we might be tempted to stop all discussion at the statement “being a woman” or “and also woman” – but Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions go on, broadending our understanding and revealing something different in his other books, lectures, conversations and letters. Attempting to elevate the “being a woman” or “and also woman” sentences to being the supreme and final statement on the subject of women dikṣā-guru is totally unjustified; as unjustified and unfair as it would be to promote that “only a householder brāhmaṇa can initiate.” – [pages 41, 42]

In the above exhibit from pages 41 and 42 of their book, the strike-thru phrase, “To implement this conclusion,” within the square parenthesis clearly indicates the author(s) intention to omit the important contextual connection with previous sentences. While quoting from the Cc *Madhya* 4.111 purport, the author(s) selected one sentence at the beginning of a paragraph, skipped over important contextual sentences following the beginning sentence of the purport, and then jumped to the end of that paragraph.

To elaborate, the author(s) picked the statement, “**According to the pāñcarātra injunction, only a householder brāhmaṇa can initiate. Others cannot,**” which appears at the beginning of the purport to Cc *Madhya* 4.111. Then they cleverly omitted several following sentences along with the connecting contextual words, “To implement this conclusion,” and jumped to the sentence “Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu gave

us His opinion....” of that purport. So, to understand why the contextual text, omitted by the author(s), is so important let us study the actual purport of Cc *Madhya* 4.111, as cited below (emphasis ours):

“In this connection, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura comments that Advaita Ācārya took initiation from Mādhavendra Purī, who was a *sannyāsī* in the disciplic succession of the Madhva-sampradāya. According to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu: *kibā vipra kibā nyāsī śūdra kene naya, yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā, sei ‘guru’ haya* “A person may be a *brāhmaṇa*, a *sannyāsī*, a *śūdra* or whatever but if he is well conversant in the science of Kṛṣṇa, he can become a guru.” (Cc. *Madhya* 8.128) This statement is supported by Śrī Mādhavendra Purī. **According to the *pāñcarātra* injunction, only a householder *brāhmaṇa* can initiate. Others cannot.** When a person is initiated, it is assumed that he has become a *brāhmaṇa*; without being initiated by a proper *brāhmaṇa*, one cannot be converted into a *brāhmaṇa*. In other words, unless one is a *brāhmaṇa*, he cannot make another a *brāhmaṇa*. A *gṛhastha-brāhmaṇa* partaking of the *varṇāśrama-dharma* institution can secure various types of paraphernalia to worship Lord Viṣṇu through his honest labor. Actually, people beg to be initiated by these householder *brāhmaṇas* just to become successful in the *varṇāśrama* institution or to become free from material desires. It is therefore necessary for a spiritual master in the *gṛhastha-āśrama* to be a strict Vaiṣṇava. A spiritual master from the *sannyāsa* order has very little opportunity to perform arcana, Deity worship but when one accepts a spiritual master from the transcendental *sannyāsīs*, the principle of Deity worship is not at all neglected. To implement this conclusion, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu gave us His opinion in the verse *kibā vipra kibā nyāsī*, etc. This indicates that the Lord understood the weakness of society in its maintaining that only a *gṛhastha-brāhmaṇa* should be a spiritual master. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu indicated that it does not matter whether the spiritual master is a *gṛhastha* (householder), a *sannyāsī* or even a *śūdra*.” – [Cc *Madhya* 4.III]

In the above citation of the purport to Cc *Madhya* 4.111, the parts in emphasis are what the author(s) actually quoted from the purport. Usually, they would use their “magic ellipses” to eclipse various parts that they want to hide but, on this occasion, they seemed to realize that they needed more sophisticated lexical grafting tools.

As we can see from the cut-out sentences, Śrīla Prabhupāda is explaining that the prime duty of a householder in Kṛṣṇa consciousness or as a strict Vaiṣṇava is to perform Deity worship as per *pāñcarātra-vidhi* and enable one to become free from material desires. This statement matches with another purport of Śrīla Prabhupāda:

The chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra is so powerful that it does not depend on official initiation but if one is initiated and engages in *pāñcarātra-vidhi* (Deity worship), his Kṛṣṇa consciousness will awaken very soon, and his identification with the material world will be vanquished. – [Cc *Madhya* 15.108]

The statement of Śrīla Prabhupāda is in harmony with the *Parama-saṁhita* (7.22-23) wherein it is stated:

*viṣṇubhakto gr̥hasthaśca dikṣākarma vicakṣaṇaḥ
paropakāranirataḥ cakraliṅgadharas tathā
dikṣātantra manājīvan kevalam kṛtyavatsalaḥ
yo nivr̥ttaśrtairyukta ācāryaḥ parikīrtitaḥ*

He is called an *ācārya* who is a devotee of Lord Viṣṇu, one leading a married life, with full knowledge of how to initiate, ever on the look out to help others, bearing the marks of the Disc (cakra), etc., without adopting the initiation in *dikṣā* as a profession, quite in love with the performance of his duty as such, free from worldly desire and possessed of intimate knowledge of the Vedic learning. [Parama-saṁhita 7.22-23]

A transcendental *sannyāsī* (*viṣṇubhakta*) unlike the *ekadāṇḍa* type of *sannyāsī*, engages in Deity worship and does not give up his *śikha*, his sacred thread, and his karma including

tri-kāla Sandhya-vandana.⁵⁵ In the case of *Madhva-sampradāya sannyāsīs*, although they accept *ekadaṇḍa-sannyāsa* they nonetheless continue to worship the Deity of Lord Viṣṇu in their respective *maṭhas*. In the case of *Śrī-sampradāya* one has to enter the *gṛhasthāśrama* first and then upon becoming *sannyāsīs*, accepts *tridaṇḍa-sannyāsa*, but nonetheless continues to perform *tri-kāla-sandhya* and the worship of Viṣṇu Deity in his respective *maṭha*. Even though it is not the karma of the *sannyasa* institution, a *tridaṇḍa* or transcendental *sannyāsī* does not give up the worship of Lord Viṣṇu.⁵⁶ Hence, at the same time he does not violate the rules of *sannyasa* institution because Viṣṇu worship is on a transcendental platform, beyond any karma. Hence, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s explanation that as a strict Vaiṣṇava (*viṣṇubhakta*) one may be a householder *brāhmaṇa* or a transcendental *sannyāsī*, which is perfectly in harmony with *sadhu-vākyas* and is well centered upon the statements of *śāstras* such as *Parama-saṁhita*.

Although Śrīla Prabhupāda did not cite the verses from the *Parama-saṁhita*, his explanations, based on that scripture, establish that the essence of *vaiṣṇava-dīkṣā* is Deity worship. He says that the purpose of the *varṇāśrama-dharma* institution, is for people to worship Deities to get free from material identification or material desires and hence they are normally keen to get initiated into Deity worship via *pāñcarātra-vidhi*. He further says that in a society whose practices are according to strict *vaiṣṇava-sampradāya*, one can take initiation not only from a householder but also from a transcendental *sannyāsī* since in all *vaiṣṇava-sampradāyas*, everyone including the *tridaṇḍī-sannyāsīs* are authorized to worship the Deity. With this context one can understand why Advaita Ācārya, a

55 Salutations to the Sun-god or chanting of the *Gāyatrī* mantra at dawn, mid-day, and dusk.

56 In the *Śrī-sampradāya*, if a *naiṣṭika-brahmacārī* (lifelong celibate) takes up *sannyāsa* he does so only after symbolically entering the householder life by tying a *maṅgala-sūtra* to a plantain tree.

householder, took initiation from Mādhavendra Purī, who was a *sannyāsī* in the disciplic succession of the *Madhva-sampradāya*. Transcendental *sannyāsīs* like Mādhavendra Purī are not just ordinary *sannyāsīs* but are *Vaiṣṇavas* who do not neglect Deity worship just like a *Vaiṣṇava-brāhmaṇa* householder should not neglect Deity worship.

The author(s) left out Śrīla Prabhupāda's words, "To implement this conclusion," which is the contextual link to the next sentence that presents Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's opinion presented in the verse *kibā vipra kibā nyāsī*. Prabhupāda explains that a spiritual master must be conversant in the essence of *śāstra* (i.e he must understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead), irrespective of whether one is a *gṛhastha* (householder) or a *sannyāsī* or even a *śūdra*. There is no need to add or subtract any information from this purport; the purport is self-explanatory.

Obviously, if one were to rely on the information presented on pages 41 and 42 of the book in contention, one can be misled and agree with the author(s)' narrative. However, a closer study reveals that the author(s) not only tactfully omitted *guru-vākya* (Śrīla Prabhupāda's words) from the purport to Cc *Madhya* 4.111 but also did not bother to refer to *sādhu-vākyas* from our *sampradāya* or the practices of other *Vaiṣṇava-sampradāyas*.⁵⁷ Moreover, the author(s), by super imposing their speculative narratives on to the purport to SB 4.12.32, attempt to misdirect their readers away from the straight forward meaning of that purport, which is otherwise simple to understand. This is clearly an attempt to trick their readers into a wrong understanding and thus it also exposes the author(s)' ulterior motive of achieving their agenda at any cost. As we have already explained before, the statements of the SB 4.12.32 purport are well supported by *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* verses, hence it is a straightforward situation and does not require such complicated and illegitimate harmonization. What can we say regarding such actions

⁵⁷ It was already explained the *sanyāsa* practices of both *Śrī-sampradāya* and *Madhva-sampradāya*.

that perpetuate false understandings on this topic through well-engineered lexical sleight of the hand in the guise of unintentional oversight? In his purport to Cc *Madhya* 6.177 Śrīla Prabhupāda cautions us about the tactics of *vitaṇḍā*, *chala*, and *nigraha* all of which are exemplary in these passages from pages 41 and 42 of the book in contention.

The word *vitaṇḍā* indicates that a debater, not touching the main point or establishing his own point, simply tries to refute the other person’s argument. When one does not touch the direct meaning but tries to divert attention by misinterpretation, he engages in *chala*. The word *nigraha* also means always trying to refute the arguments of the other party. – [Cc *Madhya* 6.177 purport]

Whimsical speculations exposed

In continuation from the previous section, let us also consider the remaining portion of the purport to Cc *Madhya* 4.111:

A spiritual master simply must be conversant in the essence of the *śāstra*; he must understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Only then can one become a spiritual master. *Dikṣā* means initiating a disciple with transcendental knowledge by which he becomes freed from all material contamination.” – [Cc *Madhya* 4.111]

Hence, Śrīla Prabhupāda says that one who is not conversant with the essence of *śāstra* will become the source of false impressions and material contamination. Transcendental knowledge can never be attained if one were to just look at a line, or word or portion of a text outside of its context and interpret it whimsically. However, in this case, by starting with a wrong premise – that in *satya-yuga* humanity was never initiated in the *pāñcarātri*ka system – the author(s) merely built a sand castle of arguments. Their example statement – **According to the pāñcarātri injunction, only a householder brāhmaṇa can initiate. Others cannot.** – cited from a purport to Cc *Madhya*, 4.111 is not related to the discussion regarding the purport to SB 4.12.32.

Nonetheless, the citation (*Cc Madhya*, 4.111 purport) teaches us that one has to understand the harmony between *sādhuvākya* and *guru-vākya* centered upon *śāstra-vākya*. Through this refutation, we will harmonize all such statements by consulting *śāstra-vākya*. Now let us consider the Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport to SB 4.12.32 and his room conversation (San Diego, 29-June-1972 as cited on page 27 of the book in contention) in light of the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* (1.42-44) verses that the author(s) were unaware of at the time they wrote the book in question:

Prabhupāda: Jāhnavā-devī, Lord Nityānanda's wife, she was ācārya . . . It is not that woman cannot be ācārya.

– Room Conversation, San Diego, 29 June 1972 [page 27]

In the above room conversation, although Śrīla Prabhupāda did not quote scriptural evidence for his statement, “Jāhnavā-devī, Lord Nityānanda's wife, **she was ācārya . . . It is not that woman cannot be ācārya,**” we can see from the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* (1.44) verse that being the consort of Lord Nityānanda, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Jāhnavā-devī is certainly on the *siddha* platform (*pratyakṣitātma-nāthānām*) and hence, as a woman she is qualified to be an ācārya. The *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* (1.37-43) specify who can and who cannot be an ācārya and what are all the material qualifications including the bodily identification needed to become an ācārya. But, the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* (1.44) provides an exception to all the “*niṣedhas*” or “don't(s)” starting with verses 1.37 through 1.43. Now let us consider the following line from the purport to SB 4.12.32:

“... According to *śāstric* injunctions, there is no difference between *śikṣā-guru* and *dikṣā-guru*, and generally the *śikṣā-guru* later on becomes the *dikṣā-guru*. Sunīti, however, being a woman, and specifically his mother, could not become Dhruva Mahārāja's *dikṣā-guru*.” [SB 4.12.32 purport]

In the above citation of a portion of the purport to SB 4.12.32, Śrīla Prabhupāda states that **according to śāstric injunctions, Sunīti being a woman and mother could not become**

Dhruva Mahārāja’s dīkṣā-guru, which is in perfect harmony with the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* verse 1.42 (*na jātu mantra-dā nārī*). Moreover, the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* verse *striyaḥ śūdrādayaś caiva ... nārhanṭy ācāryatām kvacit* (1.43) emphasizes that even though they can teach others on moral or ethical grounds, women can never become an *ācārya* at any time. In both of these examples presented above, we find the synergy between Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statements – contained in his conversations and his purports – are indeed aligned with the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*.

Refuting refutations of “Sunīti argument”

On page 46 of their book, as shown below, the author(s), draw some conclusions about this topic accusing the anti-FDG/WDG camp of some major errors of judgment:

The “Sunīti argument” rests on three mistakes: a) **Imposing an imaginary meaning** (a universal prohibition on women initiating) that was never intended or expressed. b) **Ignoring the different primary emphasis** of the original transcript (the “family relationship” instead of the gender). c) **Disregarding the fact that the system of initiation in place at the time of Sunīti** was radically different than now. As far as this third error, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains in Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta: The following injunction is given in the Hari-bhakti-vilāsa (1.194) regarding mantra-adhikārī, the qualification for receiving mantra initiation: *tāntrikeṣu ca mantreṣu dīkṣāyām yoṣitām api sādhvīnām adhikāro ‘sti śūdrādinām ca sad-dhiyām* “**Śūdras and women** who are chaste and sincerely interested in understanding the Absolute Truth **are qualified to be initiated with the pāñcarātriṇa-mantras.**” . . . If one actually wants to serve Kṛṣṇa, it doesn’t matter whether one is a śūdra, vaiśya or even a woman. If one is sincerely eager to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra or dīkṣā-mantra, one is qualified to be initiated according to the pāñcarātriṇa process. However, according to Vedic principles, only a brāhmaṇa who is fully engaged in his occupational duties can be initiated. Śūdras and women are not admitted to a vaidika initiation.

Sunīti **could not initiate in the Vedic age**; but, at least in principle, she could become a *dikṣā-guru* in ISKCON. –Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Madhya-līlā* 24.331, purport – [p 46]

Let us analyze the above passage with evidence from *śāstra-vākyas*. In the above passage, the line item, “imposing an imaginary meaning,” is applicable only to those who unnecessarily interpret the sentence, “Sunīti, however, being a woman...,” of the SB 4.12.32 purport. The fact is that all such interpretations of the purport to SB 4.12.32 are not based on *śāstras* and hence are imaginary impositions on the actual meaning of the purport. However, it has already been established that the sentence in contention from the SB 4.12.32 purport perfectly aligns with the statements of the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* (verses 1.37 through 1.44) that do impose a universal prohibition on women becoming a guru. Unaware of these verses from the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*, the author(s) present spurious interpretations to the SB 4.12.32 purport and thereby they are the ones imposing “**an imaginary meaning.**”

The second accusation that starts with, “**Ignoring the different primary emphasis...**,” is proven to be an unnecessary concocted mundane interpretation of an otherwise very simple straightforward statement based on *śāstras*. As a result of their ignorance, the author(s) – ignorant of the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*’s prohibition on women who are not on the *pratyakṣitātmanāthas* platform from assuming the role of *dikṣā-guru* – resort to mundane interpretations of the purport to SB 4.12.32 and thus commit another offense of “*artha-vāda.*”

The last accusation of the author(s) is based on the wrong assumption: the author(s) state that the system of initiation in *satya-yuga*, was exclusively *vaidika* – a system radically different from the *pāñcarātra* system practiced at present times. First of all, the author(s) assumption that Dhruva Mahārāja was initiated through the *vaidika* process is in violation with Śrīla Prabhupāda’s purport to SB 4.8.22 wherein he clearly explains

that Dhruva Mahārāja being a five-year-old boy could not be initiated through the *vaidika* system but under the *pāñcarātra* system or the process of *bhakti-yoga*, by which even a child less than five years old, or anyone of any age, can be initiated and purified. In prior sections, we already presented appropriate evidence from Śrīla Prabhupāda’s purports and our predecessor *ācārya*’s commentaries to SB 4.8.52–54, in which they categorically state that sage Nārada initiated Dhruva Mahārāja into the *pāñcarātra-dvādaśākṣara* mantra. Hence, the final conclusion is that the system of initiation at the time of Sunīti was not exclusively the *vaidika* system but also the *pāñcarātra* system of initiation was in existence, which the author(s) seem to be ignorant of. Furthermore, the author(s) seem to be unaware that the *pāñcarātri*ka system allows *śūdra*, *vaiśya*, or even a woman **to receive initiation** (*Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* verses 1.14 and 15) into the *pāñcarātra* mantras including the *pāñcarātra-dvādaśākṣara*. Hence, quoting Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Madhya-līlā* 24.331 to substantiate that the *vaidika* system does not allow women to receive initiation into *vaidika* mantras is irrelevant because the context of SB 4.12.32 is clearly in regards to the *pāñcarātra* system.

The last part of the author(s)’ concluding note clearly exposes their sheer ignorance due to which they speculate that under *pāñcarātra* system if a chaste woman is qualified to receive initiation, then she automatically becomes qualified to give initiations, which is absolutely incorrect.

Śrīla Prabhupāda’- *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*: harmony

This section establishes through examples how the various recorded statements of Śrīla Prabhupāda (books, lectures, conversations, letters, etc.) are based on *śāstra-vākyas* as the central point or pivot. As we already explained, at the time of publishing of the book in contention (2013), most ISKCON devotees, including the author(s), were not aware of the fact that the statements made in SB 4.12.32 (“**being a woman**”) by Śrīla

Prabhupāda are direct *śāstric* injunctions from the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*'s verses 1.42 and 1.43 (cited and explained before). Nonetheless, the fact remains the same that Śrīla Prabhupāda is *śāstra-cakṣuṣaḥ*, and hence his statement ("According to *śāstric* injunctions... **being a woman**" or "**and also woman**") perfectly harmonizes with *śāstra-vākyas*. For that matter even his response to Prof. O'Connell or Ātreya Ṛṣi, regarding "can a woman become a guru?" is nothing but a paraphrase of the exception to the rule as stated in the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*'s verse 1.44. Let us consider both of those conversations in which Śrīla Prabhupāda states that women can become gurus.

Prof. O'Connell: Is it possible, Swamiji, for a woman to be a guru in the line of disciplic succession?
Prabhupāda: Yes. Jāhnavā-devī was Nityānanda's wife. She became. If she is able to go to the highest perfection of life, why it is not possible to become guru? **But not so many.**
 – Interview with Professors O'Connell, Motilal, and Shivaram, Toronto, 18 June 1976

What Śrīla Prabhupāda answered is directly in line with the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* (1.44), which gives an exception to the rules specified in the previous verses of *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* (1.38-43). His statement, "**Jāhnavā-devī was Nityānanda's wife,**" means that She was the consort of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and hence She is a *pratyakṣitātma-nātha* (always seeing God face-to-face). According to *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* (1.44) *pratyakṣitātma-nāthānām* or such personalities (male or female) are exempt to the rules mentioned in verses 1.37 to 1.43 and hence can become a guru. The statement, "**But not so many,**" is also in line with *śāstras* since very few devotee women are on the level of *yoga-pratyakṣas* or *pratyakṣitātma-nāthas*. This is confirmed by Śrīla Prabhupāda himself in another conversation with Ātreya Ṛṣi, as cited below:

Ātreya Ṛṣi: A woman's statement?

Prabhupāda: If a woman is perfect in Kṛṣṇa consciousness... **Just like Jāhnavā-devī, Lord Nityānanda's wife, she was ācārya. She was ācārya.** She was controlling the whole Vaiṣṇava community.

Ātreya Ṛṣi: Lord Nityānanda?

Prabhupāda: Wife. Jāhnavā-devī. She was controlling the whole Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community.

Ātreya Ṛṣi: **Do you have references about that in any of your books, Śrīla Prabhupāda?**

Prabhupāda: **I don't think.** But there are many ācāryas. Maybe somewhere I might have mentioned. **It is not that woman cannot be ācārya. Generally, they do not become. In a very special case.** But Jāhnavā-devī was accepted as but she did not declare.—
Room conversation – 29 June 1972, San Diego.

In this conversation with Ātreya Ṛṣi, Śrīla Prabhupāda states that, **“Jāhnavā-devī, Lord Nityānanda's wife,”** was an ācārya, which is consistent with his answer in the previously cited conversation with Prof. O'Connell. His statement in this conversation, **“It is not that woman cannot be ācārya. Generally, they do not become. In a very special case,”** is perfectly aligned with śāstra-vākya and is consistent with his answer, **“But not so many,”** to Prof. O'Connell.

These examples demonstrate that Śrīla Prabhupāda's answers – in his purports, his conversations, or his lectures – to the question of the authority of women to initiate, are perfectly harmonious with one another and with śāstra-vākyas.

Books are the basis

In this section, we will establish that among the ocean of Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings, the instructions contained in his books, purports, and lectures are the primary basis for everyone. We will establish with evidence that Śrīla Prabhupāda himself

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